

6 Irving Street
Albany, NY 12202

November 12, 2014

The Honorable Eric Coleman
Senator and Chair, Judiciary Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 2500
Hartford, Connecticut 06106-151

Re: Judicial appointment of Kevin Doyle

Dear Senator Coleman:

My name is (Ms.) Darryl McGrath, and I am a journalist and editor in Albany, N.Y., employed by the statewide education union, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT). I have only recently learned that Mr. Doyle, currently with the Connecticut State's Attorney's Office for New Haven County, is about to undergo hearings for his nomination to the judiciary. Based on my dealings with Mr. Doyle under incredibly difficult circumstances, I believe he would be an excellent and fair-minded judge, and I hope that your committee will endorse his appointment.

I met Mr. Doyle three years ago, when the state subpoenaed me as a witness in the trial of Kevin Benefield. Mr. Doyle was the lead prosecutor in this case, which was the second murder trial in the killing of Barbara Pelkey. Mrs. Pelkey, as you may know, was killed while working alone during a night shift in a manufacturing office in Wallingford in September 1986. Kenneth Ireland, the man originally convicted in this case, was released on DNA evidence five years ago; and police subsequently arrested Mr. Benefield, based on DNA samples they had gathered from the other employees in the industrial park where Mrs. Pelkey worked.

I was the reporter of record for this case in 1986, when I was employed as a police reporter for the Record-Journal newspaper in Wallingford. I unwittingly interviewed Mr. Benefield at the scene in a crowd of onlookers the morning that Mrs. Pelkey's body was found, and 25 years later, I was the only person prosecutors could locate who could place Mr. Benefield at the scene early that morning. This testimony became important in the trial, as it contradicted Mr. Benefield's account of what time he reported to work that morning and raised the question of why he was there so early, when he did not have to be at work until much later that morning.

By the time of the second trial in 2012, I was married, living out of state and had just learned that my husband had a terminal heart condition. My husband died in September 2013.

Mr. Doyle was incredibly sympathetic to the unfortunate chain of events that drew me into this second trial; I was the only civilian witness to testify for the state. I agreed to be a cooperative witness, in large part because of how Mr. Doyle approached me for this difficult and even frightening task. He and his assistant prosecutor, Ms. Miranda, conveyed great understanding and compassion for the unfortunate circumstances and sheer chance that made me a witness in a murder trial, and a highly publicized one at that. I did testify, and I believe that the excellent preparation that Mr. Doyle provided to me helped me get through this very difficult process. As I'm sure you know, Mr. Benefield was convicted, was sentenced to 60 years in

prison and recently lost an appeal.

I cannot convey how nerve-wracking it was to testify, or how well Mr. Doyle understood this. He was reassuring, calming and encouraging, and told me to simply tell the jury what I remembered. He and Ms. Miranda met with me three times before the trial, and I felt from the beginning that their preparation helped me get through this. Although the defense attorney tried to get me to waver in my testimony, I knew that I was telling the truth, and I could not be persuaded to change my statements. I am at peace with what I said and did.

Mr. Doyle has remained in periodic contact with me in the nearly three years since I testified, to inform me on the appeals process. He also called me the day that Mr. Benefield was convicted, to make sure that I knew. I really appreciated this, because I was very concerned about the prospect of Mr. Benefield being released. I also appreciated his update on the appeal, especially in view of all that I've endured regarding my husband's death since the trial.

This was an unusual chain of events that stemmed from a terrible tragedy - the brutal rape and murder of a young wife and mother. I believe that Mr. Doyle is an excellent candidate for the judiciary, both in terms of temperament and his understanding of the criminal process, and I hope that your committee does wholeheartedly endorse him. If I had been able to testify during the public hearing, I would have done so; unfortunately, it was not possible for me to attend. I hope that this letter will stand in stead of my testimony, and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at Darryllee@aol.com, or at 518-813-2822. Please submit this letter as part of the hearing record, also.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Darryl McGrath".

(Ms.) Darryl McGrath